



CHARLES EDE

'The greatest influence on my work came from Greek sculpture. That was when in my early teens I worked day after day in the British Museum, London. I believe that this influence grew in strength with the years. It is from the Greeks that I learned to understand form.'

Clara Klinghoffer



"Clara had met and come on friendly terms with the Indian philosopher and poet Rabindranath Tagore, and Protima, his daughter- in-law. On the few occasions we visited them in the Regina Hotel, in Gloucester Road, Tagore seemed invariably to me the personification of some biblical figure: Moses maybe, or perhaps even Abraham, the patriarch. Looking much younger than his 73 years, Tagore was dressed in flowing white robes. Thick snow- white hair covered his temples, ears and neck, while his greying beard came halfway down his chest. Watching him spellbound, I could not help feeling that he was quite out of place enthroned upon a shabby armchair in this small Kensington caravanserai. He spoke to us of his lecture tour, his poems and his works on philosophy; but invariably the conversation would turn to Santeniketan, the school for experimental education he had founded in Calcutta in 1901. He admired Clara's work, and as he posed for her for several drawings, he would urge her over and over again to come to Calcutta, and attend his school for at least a year. He was so insistent that in the end I began to be afraid Clara would actually decide to go to India!

On our visits Protima: would say very little. She listened attentively to the great man, as if all he said was as new and exhilarating to her as it was to us. Some time later, when Protima came to Clara's studio to sit for her portrait in oils--looking very attractive in her beautiful saree and glittering jewellery--she seemed to be far more at ease. At times she even became loquacious, talking to Clara of her marital troubles and about the eventful life she was leading, accompanying her famous father-in-law all over the globe. There exists a sweet note Protima sent to Clara from Paris in August, 1920. Her knowledge of English was limited and her spelling somewhat out of the ordinary:

*"At last we are in Paris. The sea was very rough and
 "all the way I felt sick. Though we have not really
 "saw much of Paris yet, but only the glimpse of people
 "in the street and pleasant weather gave me an impression
 "of gay life and glorious day. I shall write you later on
 "what more pleasure we find here. We have tested your delicious cakes,
 all the way. With best love, from your
 11 affectionet PROTIMA. 11*

Now and then Clara went back to the East End, to re-discover the fascination of its lively scenes, the attractiveness of its people. She painted a Jewish child in a fancy-dress, and a fine portrait of a curly-headed young Jewess. Returning to Hackney she interrupted work on the studies of her sisters to paint Protima, daughter-in-law of the world-famous Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore. This done, she sketched Rosie, monochrome study in light green, and Rosie in a peculiar, high black fur cap, hands placidly folded in her lap. Then followed Fanny in a large straw hat, and --recalling her happy times in the British Museum under the protection of Harry Walden, -she painted him, complete with bowler hat and shiny jacket his long nose up in the wind like that of an eager hunting dog."

Joseph W.F. Stoppelman, from *Clara Klinghoffer – The Life and Career of a Traditional Artist by her husband.*



Clara Klinghoffer (British, 1900-1970)

Portrait of the artist Pratima Devi Tagore (1893-1969), 1920

Oil on canvas
Signed and dated '1920/C.KLINGHOFFER' (lower right)
100 x 76 cm

Clara Klinghoffer's 1920 portrait of Pratima Devi Tagore (1893–1969), the Indian artist and daughter-in-law of the esteemed poet and social reformer Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), exemplifies the artist's exceptional ability to blend realism with deep sensitivity. At a time when the art world was predominantly male-dominated, Klinghoffer's portrayal of Pratima stands as a powerful intersection of female perspectives—an important example of one female artist capturing another. This dynamic enhances the contemporary significance of the portrait as we reassess the roles women played in society and their shared experiences navigating and asserting their presence within their cultural contexts in the early 20th century. Klinghoffer's depiction of Pratima reveals a nuanced understanding of her subject's inner life and societal role, reflecting the shared empathy and insight of two women deeply engaged in cultural and artistic expression at that time. Clara Klinghoffer, born in Poland and an immigrant to London's East End, had a profound understanding of what it meant to be a foreigner. At the turn of the 20th century, the East End was a vibrant multicultural community, home to diverse immigrant groups, including Jewish, Irish, Indian, Italian, and others who lived side by side. This rich tapestry of cultures informed her artistic perspective. Her portrait of Protima exemplifies the empathy and nuanced understanding that Klinghoffer was adept at capturing in her diverse subjects (see also Fig 1 and 2 below). Through her work, she not only depicted individual stories but also reflected the collective experiences of her community, making her portraits resonate deeply with viewers.

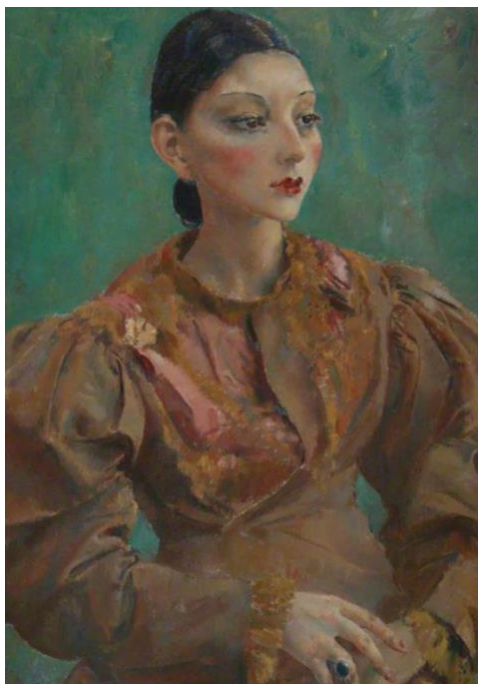


Fig.1. Clara Klinghoffer, Giuseppina, c. 1934, Manchester Art Gallery

Fig.2. Clara Klinghoffer, Lakshme, 1918, location unknown

Protima Tagore, born Pratima Devi, was a Bengali artist and the daughter-in-law of the celebrated poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore. Pratima studied art under the renowned painter Nandalal Bose and Rabindranath Tagore himself, who encouraged her to pursue her artistic talents. She exhibited her work at the Indian Society of Oriental Art, run by the Tagore family, from 1915 onwards. Later, she moved to Paris, where she studied the Italian "wet fresco" method, further honing her skills.

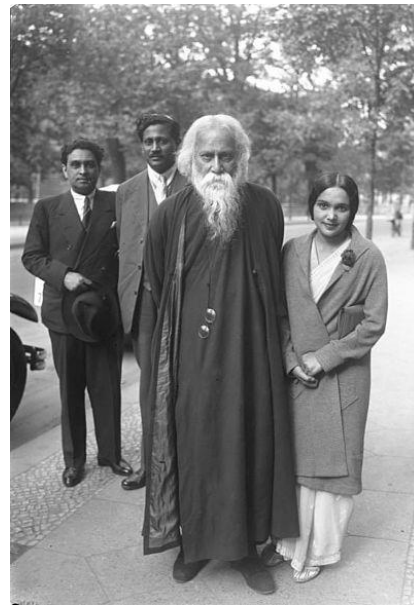
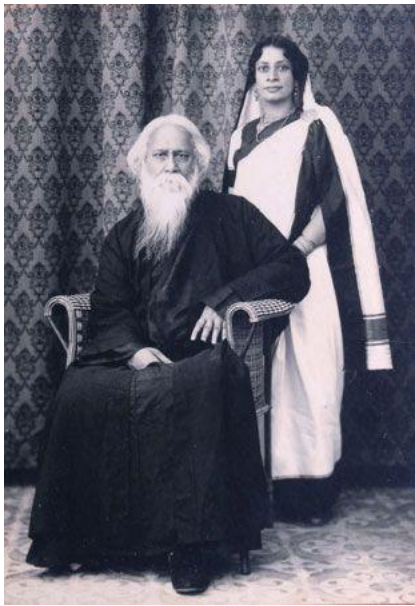


Fig.3. Photograph of Rabindranath Tagore and Protima, India, date unknown
 Fig.4. Photograph of Rabindranath Tagore and Protima in London c. 1910s

Often called "Protima" as a form of respect and endearment within her family and among her peers. The name "Protima" means "idol" or "image" in Bengali, which carries connotations of reverence and admiration. In Bengali culture, it is common for names to be adapted or altered for various reasons, including ease of pronunciation or personal preference. The name "Protima" may have been used more frequently to reflect her persona as an artist and cultural figure, especially considering her contributions to art, dance, and her role as a muse within the Tagore family.

Immediately after her marriage in 1910, Pratima, accompanied by her husband, lived for some time at the family estate in Shilaidaha, now in Bangladesh. She later returned to Santiniketan, following in the footsteps of her father-in-law and husband, immersing herself in the activities of Visva Bharati. Pratima was in charge of the dance curriculum at the music and dance school founded by Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan and is credited as one of the pivotal influences that shaped Tagore's dance-dramas in their early years. She had a remarkable ability to pick up new crafts and adapt them for the Silpa Sadan curriculum, contributing significantly to the educational initiatives at Santiniketan.

Pratima often accompanied her father-in-law on his travels, and they frequently visited London. This portrait is the first of three works that Klinghoffer executed of Pratima, marking the beginning of a significant relationship between the artist and the Tagore family.

Klinghoffer began work on this oil portrait in 1919, interrupting other paintings to focus on Pratima sitting for her during her visit. The demure pose, with Pratima's downcast eyes, suggests a modest and gentle character, contrasting with the finely modelled features of her face and hands. However, Klinghoffer employed looser, softer brushwork to capture the translucent folds of Pratima's sari, creating a delicate, shimmering backdrop that contrasts with the more precise rendering of her features. This contrast highlights Klinghoffer's skill in balancing different techniques within a single composition, allowing the viewer to appreciate both the physical likeness of the subject and the ethereal quality of the material world around her. As Klinghoffer's husband recalled pertinently about Pratima's sittings '*...she seemed to be far more at ease. At times she even became loquacious, talking to Clara of her marital troubles and about the eventful life she was leading, accompanying her famous father-in-law all over the globe.*'

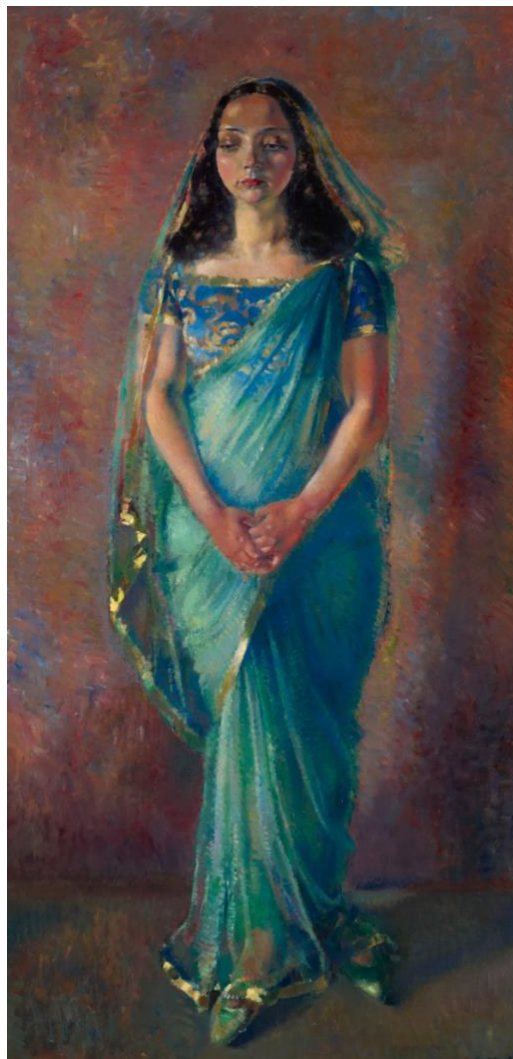


Fig. 5. The Girl in the Green Sari (Portrait of the artist Pratima Devi), 1926, Ben Uri Gallery, London

Klinghoffer's relationship with the Tagore family extended beyond mere portraiture. She and her husband often visited Rabindranath Tagore and Pratima at the Regina Hotel in Gloucester Road, where Tagore would discuss his works on philosophy and his educational initiatives in India. Tagore admired Klinghoffer's work and even urged her to visit Santiniketan, his experimental school in Calcutta. While Pratima was often reserved during these visits, she became more at ease in the studio, sharing stories of her marital troubles and her eventful life traveling with her famous father-in-law.

A later full-length portrait of Pratima was carried out in 1926, the year of Klinghoffer's marriage to the Dutch journalist Joop Stoppelman. Stoppelman recalled Pratima coming to Clara's studio wearing a beautiful sari and glittering jewellery. That portrait is now in the Ben Uri collection, London, and became the first work by a woman artist to be acquired for the collection, marking an important milestone in the recognition of female artists.

This portrait, therefore, not only serves as a representation of Pratima Tagore but also as a reflection of the rich cultural exchange between East and West, and the profound personal connections that Klinghoffer forged through her art. The fact that the later painting of her in a Blue Sari was added to the Ben Uri collection underscores the importance of the present work within the artist's oeuvre and within the broader context of early 20th-century portraiture.



Fig.6. Portrait of Annie Salomans with her book, Clara Klinghoffer, 1918

"Miss Klinghoffer must be regarded as a new star...Her work is strongly individualistic and original, her point of view strictly her own, her power great...If she elects to do a thing it is done with masterful force. Her drawings of heads are splendid, full of the beautiful spirit of Raphael. Her portraits are uncompromising in their severity, but full of clever characterization, and the use to which the hands are put in helping to develop the character of the subject is a revelation. Such work is welcome, for its promise is very great."

- 3rd May, 1920, London Daily Graphic
(the year the present portrait was painted)

"I consider Clara Klinghoffer an artist of great talent, a painter of the first order... Her understanding of form places her in the very first rank of draughtsmen in the world."

- Sir Jacob Epstein, London, March 30, 1939.



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